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People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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We wish all our dear readers
a very blessed and immenscly fruitful 2026
— People's Reporter —

New Year Messages

A New Year Reflection for 2026
Hope on Unfamiliar Paths

Vinod Victor

As 2026 unfolds, Isaiah's ancient promise speaks anew: even on unknown roads, God leads; even in darkness, light emerges; even on rough ground, a way is made; and even in exile-like moments of history, we are not forsaken. This is not merely a word for reflection, but a call to faithful living — courageous, compassionate, and hopeful — on unfamiliar paths.

Isaiah 42:16

The arrival of a New Year is always layered with emotion. It carries the quiet hope of new beginnings, yet it also bears the weight of unresolved questions from the past. As we step into 2026, these tensions feel sharper than ever. We live in a world marked by uncertainty and unfolding complexities. The familiar is being reshaped each day as societies grapple with rapid technological advances, shifting generational intelligence, climate anxiety, political polarization, and new, unsettling forms of violence. The road ahead often feels uncharted, and yet, amid turbulence, humanity continues to strive for composure, meaning, and hope.

It is into such a context that the words of Isaiah 42:16 speak with remarkable relevance: "I will lead the blind by a road they do not know… I will guide them by paths they have not known. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them."

These words were first spoken to a people whose world had collapsed. The Babylonian exile had shattered everything familiar to the people of Israel—their land, hills and waters, sacred spaces, political systems, and social order. War and violence had uprooted them from identity and memory. They stood disoriented before an unknown future, unable to

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A Faith Resource for the New Year -
Silence of God

M. Mani Chacko

One more year has gone by. Another year of challenges and opportunities is before us. As in the past year, there would be experiences of the absence and presence of God in the New Year as well. When such experiences are encountered, let us realize that God is not really absent or silent; that God is indeed present with us even when we think God is silent. The point is, we cannot fathom the working of God in history.

"Theodicy" is a term which is often used in theological discussions with the question "Why do the righteous suffer?" The issue implied in this term is the issue of the Justice of God– "How can a just God punish the just and the righteous?" Another way of addressing this issue of Theodicy is by raising the question "Why is God silent?"

Theodicy or Silence of God is a subject that has been discussed at length by theologians and Biblical scholars down through the ages. In most of these discussions, the emphasis is on "reason" and they try to rationalize the suffering which one goes through in life.

The focus of this short reflection is not on the "reason" to understand the issue but rather the attempt here is to understand the Silence of God as a "faith resource". The issue "Silence of God" can be dealt with from different perspectives.

First, the Silence of God as a Myth

There is the view that God is a myth and hence "Silence of God" is also a myth. The suicide of Kurt Cobain, the rock legend is a clear case in point. On April 9, 1994, his body with his head blown into unrecognizable bits, was found by an electrician in Seattle, Washington. His album Never Mind sold ten million copies, displacing even Michael

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A Prayer for the New Year 2026
"Teach Us to Count Our Days"

Daniel S. Schipani

**"Teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart."**

Psalm 90

**Much has been written about prayer and praying.
Prayers of all kinds and for all occasions.
So it is especially fitting to look for a suitable prayer
at the threshold of a new calendar year. We find many prayers in the Bible,
especially in the Psalms. And psalm 90 comes to mind,
a beautiful poem and supplication
attributed to Moses, "a man of God."**

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Global Well-Being 2026:
Better Together

John Thomas Karingattil

**The New Year Vision for 2026 calls for
a renewed commitment to inclusivity and collective action.**

Global well being in the 21st century is increasingly shaped by interdependence between peoples, communities, nations, and ecosystems. In an era marked by climate uncertainty, food insecurity, social inequality, and geopolitical tensions, sustainable progress can no longer be pursued in isolation.

The vision of *Better Together* affirms that human flourishing is rooted in cooperation, shared responsibility, and inclusive development. By recognising the interconnected contributions of individuals, communities, and institutions, global well-being emerges

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People's Reporter
A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

Military interventions inevitable for survival of the US !

Within a short time after the ceasefire in Gaza and kicking negotiations for the end of the war in Ukraine, the US started military interventions in Venezuela. After enforcing blockade in the Caribbean waters, the US seized three Venezuelan oil tankers since December 10, and President Trump on 16 December announced a blockade of "sanctioned oil vessels" sailing to, and from, that country. Venezuela called it the latest example of Washington's "piracy, kidnapping, theft of private property and extrajudicial executions in international waters".

The illegal actions against a small country in Latin America are aimed at appropriating the oil wealth of that country through change of the regime of that country. The US, through intermittent armed interventions across the world all through history, has been demonstrating that her economy cannot reign in the present way without a war somewhere in the world! Between 1776 and 2023, the US launched nearly 400 wars / military interventions across the world ! Let us take the story of the last 25 years. In 2001, the US began military interventions in Afghanistan and continued them for one and a half decades. Along with it, she started interventions in Iraq in 2003, in Libya in 2011, in Syria in 2014 and in Yemen in 2015. When the wars in these countries ended/ subsided, we find the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022 and in Gaza in 2023. While the wars referred to above, were the results of direct US interventions, the one in Ukraine is a proxy war between the US and Russia. Although the war in Gaza came as a retaliation by Israel against the attacks by Hamas, it was with the support of the US, it got intensified.

Economic interests have been the main motive behind all these wars / interventions of the US; and the US has been using war as the fuel for the growth of her economy. War has been helping her economy in four ways: One, expansion of her weapon industry; two, appropriation of raw materials from those parts of the world; three, capturing market for her products and four, influencing trade through political power. The appropriation of oil wealth from the West Asian countries has been making a special contribution to her economic growth. It is a proven fact that the US economy cannot survive in its present way, in a world without any war. In the context of wars receding in West Asia, the US has been raising the banner of the next war in China waters in the name of freedom of Taiwan. But she realizes that a war with China can be suicidal. It is after realizing this, now she turns against Venezuela, a small country.

For each war, she used to find some justification. The war in Afghanistan was named a "war against terrorism". The US withdrew from this war after surrendering to the terrorists! The war in Iraq was named "war against weapons of mass destruction". After changing the regime, she failed to prove any trace of the alleged weapons !! "Changing oppressive regimes" has been the declared objective of the other wars. But all these wars ended only with the replacing of the old oppressive regimes with new ones. The intervention in Venezuela is named as "war on drugs" with the allegation that Venezuela is sponsoring drugs trafficking. The real objective is to appropriate the oil wealth of that country by overthrowing Mr. Maduro from power and placing Mr. Juan Guaido in his place!

The way of the US, always looking for an enemy with some allegations, somewhere in the world, for intermittent wars / military interventions, to ensure the growth of her economy, is highly disturbing.

Thought for the Fortnight

"There is no difference
between a rabid dog and a war monger"

– Mehmet Murat Ildan –

New Year Messages

A Faith Resource for the New Year -
Silence of God

One of the greatest discoveries of theologians encouraged by the prophetic insight into the understanding of God is that God is a fellow companion, that God is a God of pain and in pain and that God is a fellow sufferer. This deep sight into the character of God should sustain us in the year ahead. We are not alone. God is with us in our journey of life. God is indeed present when we think God is absent or silent.

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Jackson. The phrase "never mind" means "don't bother", "don't concern yourself"."Never mind" is the logical virtue for a nihilist who thinks that there is nothing out there to give meaning and significance to anything. So permanent extinction of one's individual existence, dissolution of our individuality into ***Shoonyata*****,** which means void, nothingness, emptiness is the only way to freedom from misery. As Cobain's news of suicide spread, a number of his fans emulated his philosophy of nihilism. It was reported that there were sixty-eight suicides following his death. Cobain committed suicide because **nothingness** as the ultimate reality does nothing positive. It cannot provide joy to the world, let alone meaning or hope for the mess in one's life. For him, there is no God and hence Silence of God is a myth.

Second, the Silence of God as a Means

There is voice in silence. This is what we see in the story of Elijah as recorded in I Kings 19. Elijah rests under the broom tree very tired fleeing from the clutches of Queen Jezebel. Elijah

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was fed by the angel of God and he starts his journey to Horeb, the mount of God. Elijah comes to a cave there. The LORD asks him to go and stand before Mount Horeb. Then comes a great and strong wind but the LORD was not in the wind; after the wind an earth quake but the LORD was not in the earthquake; after the earth quake a fire but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. It is stated that "When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice came to him giving him clear directions as to what should be done. Here silence becomes a means whereby Elijah discovers God and God's voice to continue to engage in God's mission.

Third, the Silence of God as a Medium

At times, silence is a powerful language of communication. Silence is more powerful than words. In Matthew 26:62-63,we read that Jesus was seized and brought to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the elders and the scribes had gathered. The Chief priests and the whole council sought false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death but none was found to testify against him. At last two came forward and made fun of Jesus saying "This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days". Then the high priest asked Jesus to respond to the accusation.Then we read in Vs.63 "But Jesus was silent". Jesus, knowing the situation very well preferred to be silent and he was communicating through Silence.

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New Year Messages

A New Year Reflection for 2026

Hope on Unfamiliar Paths

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imagine how life could be restored. Anxiety and unfamiliarity defined their present. **It is precisely in this space of fear and loss that God's promise breaks through — not as an explanation, but as an assurance of presence and guidance.**

The first promise is striking in its honesty: "I will lead the blind by the road they have not known." Blindness here is not a failure; it is a recognition of human limitation. The exiles could not see what lay ahead, just as many today feel overwhelmed by the speed and scale of global change. **In 2026, societies are flooded with information, yet clarity remains elusive.** Misinformation, competing truths, and ideological rigidity often leave communities "blind" despite unprecedented access to knowledge. This promise reminds us that leadership—whether political, religious, or communal—must begin with humility and openness. **The New Year does not require perfect vision; it requires trust in a God who leads even when the path is unclear.**

Closely connected is the second promise: "I will guide them by paths they have not known." Guidance implies accompaniment. God does not merely point from a distance but walks with people through unfamiliar terrain. This has profound implications for our present moment. Technological innovations, particularly artificial and generative intelligence and

Isaiah 42:16 reframes how we enter the New Year.
It does not offer a naïve optimism or a promise of ease.
Instead, it offers resilient hope — a hope grounded in God's faithfulness amid uncertainty.
The passage invites us to walk forward without full visibility, to act without complete certainty, and to hope without denying pain. The journey ahead may be unfamiliar, but it is not unaccompanied.

digital surveillance, are reshaping economies, education, warfare, and human relationships. While these developments offer promise, they also raise ethical questions about dignity, justice, and accountability. Isaiah's vision suggests that true guidance is not merely technical expertise or efficiency, but moral direction. As we navigate unknown paths in 2026, the question is not only can we do this? but should we? — and for whose benefit? **We need to keep affirming that human dignity is inviolable.**

The third promise, "I will turn the darkness before them into light," speaks directly into a world wrestling with deep shadows. Darkness today manifests in prolonged wars, forced migrations, racial and religious intolerance, gender-based violence, ecological devastation, and growing mental health crises. Isaiah does not deny the reality of darkness; rather, God commits to transformation within it. This promise not only challenges the normalization of despair but also understands despair in the right perspective. For public life, it demands policies and narratives that reduce darkness rather than exploit fear. **For communities of faith and conscience, it is a call to active hope—to become bearers of light through truth-telling, reconciliation, peace-building, and advocacy for justice, even when outcomes are uncertain.**

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Equally powerful is the promise to "make the rough places smooth." Rough places are not abstract; they are lived realities. In 2026, they include widening economic inequality, fragile healthcare systems, educational disparities, unemployment driven by automation, and the marginalization of migrants and refugees including growing hostilities. This promise does not encourage passive waiting. God's work of leveling often unfolds through human agency—through courageous leadership, ethical institutions, social movements, and everyday acts of solidarity. **The New Year invites societies not merely to manage inequality, but to confront and transform the structures that perpetuate it. When systems are hijacked by powerful individuals we need prophetic boldness to confront them and the promise that helps us face the inevitable obstacles would be the one about transformation of rough spaces.**

All these promises culminate in the most intimate assurance: "I will not forsake them." For a people in exile, this was the deepest fear — that they had been abandoned by God and forgotten by history. That fear resonates powerfully today. Many feel forsaken by political systems, economic models, or social institutions that prioritize profit over people. Entire communities and ecosystems appear disposable. Against this backdrop, Isaiah's words restore dignity. They affirm that neither individuals nor nations are forgotten. God's presence endures even when familiar certainties collapse.

In the socio-political landscape of 2026, this assurance carries significant implications. It calls for a relational vision of leadership and governance—one rooted in presence, care, and long-term responsibility rather than short-term gain. It challenges the culture of abandonment and exclusion, urging societies to choose compassion over convenience and solidarity over indifference. For faith communities, it is a reminder that spiritual hope must translate into public witness—standing with the forsaken, amplifying silenced voices, and nurturing resilient communities.

Ultimately, Isaiah 42:16 reframes how we enter the New Year. It does not offer a naïve optimism or a promise of ease. Instead, it offers resilient hope — a hope grounded in God's faithfulness amid uncertainty. The passage invites us to walk forward without full visibility, to act without complete certainty, and to hope without denying pain. The journey ahead may be unfamiliar, but it is not unaccompanied.

As 2026 unfolds, Isaiah's ancient promise speaks anew: even on unknown roads, God leads; even in darkness, light emerges; even on rough ground, a way is made; and even in exile-like moments of history, we are not forsaken. This is not merely a word for reflection, but a call to faithful living—courageous, compassionate, and hopeful—on unfamiliar paths. When the intertwining of religion and politics create new forms of persecution and redefines identity, this passage should also challenge us towards a resilient response- not to worry too much about darkness but seek to follow Jesus Christ who assured- I am the light and I am the way! ●

A Faith Resource for the New Year - Silence of God

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Fourth, the Silence of God as a Mystery

Human mind is not able to understand and comprehend the silence of God experience. On the one hand, we know that God is Omniscient, the One who is present everywhere and with everyone. But the human experience is the absence of God, at times continuous absence of God. God is not there when we need God most in human life. The classic example of this experience of the absence of God is seen on the Cross. Jesus cried out to the Father God "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"It was a cry of the experience of the absence of God. But then, Jesus ultimately uttered the words from the Cross "Into your hands I commit my spirit". This indicates that Jesus was willing to admit that there is an element of mystery in our relationship with God. What is interesting is, Jesus, while experiencing the mystery of the absence of God, submits himself to God without questioning, knowing very well mystery is an aspect of the working of God. Jesus knew well even in the mystery of the absence or silence of God, God is present. **So, the theological insight which emerges here is that there is the Presence of God in the Absence of God. Once we are able to realize this great truth, the silence of God becomes a faith resource.**

Conclusion

One more year has gone by. Another year of challenges and opportunities is before us. As in the past year, there would be experiences of the absence and presence of God in the New Year as well. When such experiences are encountered, let us realize that God is not really absent or silent; that God is indeed present with us even when we think God is silent. The point is, we cannot fathom the working of God in history.

The greatest theological insight that emerges from the Bible and human experience is God cannot be absent or silent. It is only human thinking. God is God, the One who created the entire Creation, both the human and the non-human and God cannot and will not run away from God's own Creation. Rather God sustains the Creation and enables the Creation to move on towards the salvific experience of life in all its fullness.

One of the greatest discoveries of theologians encouraged by the prophetic insight into the understanding of God is that God is a fellow companion, that God is a God of pain and in pain and that God is a fellow sufferer. This deep sight into the character of God should sustain us in the year ahead. We are not alone. God is with us in our journey of life. God is indeed present when we think God is absent or silent. ●

New Year Messages

Global Well-Being 2026:
Better Together

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not merely as economic growth, but as a holistic commitment to peace, dignity, sustainability, and the common good.

In this context, the United Nations General Assembly has designated three International Years for 2026: the International Year of the Woman Farmer, the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development, and the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

These observances align with the broad theme of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, *Better Together: 80 years and more for peace, development and human rights*. Together, they highlight communities and contributions that remain central to global well-being yet are often insufficiently recognised in policy and practice. Thus the global community is invited to renew its commitment to shared responsibility, solidarity, and sustainable development.

Among these declarations, the International Year of the Woman Farmer stands out as a landmark initiative acknowledging the indispensable role women play in global agriculture and food security. Women contribute nearly half of the world's food supply, and in developing countries they account for between 60 and 80 percent of food production. Despite their centrality, women farmers continue to face persistent structural disadvantages, particularly in access to land, credit, markets, technology, and institutional support. **The declaration of 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer seeks to draw global attention to these disparities and to promote gender-equitable agricultural policies.**

The New Year Vision for 2026 calls for a renewed commitment to inclusivity and collective action. Recognising and empowering women farmers, volunteers, and pastoral communities is not merely a matter of social justice, but a strategic imperative for building resilient food systems, sustainable livelihoods, and peaceful societies. By investing in those who sustain agriculture, nurture communities, and steward natural ecosystems, the global community can move closer to a future that is equitable, climate-resilient, and truly sustainable, embodying the conviction that humanity progresses best when it moves forward better together.

The Indian context illustrates both the magnitude of women's contribution and the depth of existing inequalities. Nearly 80 percent of economically active women in India are engaged in agriculture, yet only 8.3 percent of agricultural land is owned by women. This imbalance restricts their access to institutional credit, government schemes, and decision-making processes. Women farmers also experience a *double burden* of agricultural labour and unpaid domestic responsibilities, compounded by limited access to digital technologies, climate information, and long-term financing. Climate change further intensifies these challenges, as women often bear the brunt of environmental shocks in drought - and flood-prone regions.

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Addressing these structural constraints requires moving beyond symbolic recognition toward transformative policy action. Gender-sensitive policy design, grounded in sex-disaggregated and context-specific data, is essential for identifying and responding to women's distinct needs in agriculture. Improved access to land, credit, irrigation, digital technologies, and climate advisory services can significantly enhance productivity and resilience. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities for women and men could raise farm output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent. Supporting women-led agri-value chains through self-help groups, cooperatives, and collective enterprises can further strengthen income security and market participation. **Equally important is capacity building that enables women's participation in planning, technology dissemination, and leadership.**

The broader vision of 2026 extends beyond agriculture alone. **The International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development affirms the critical role of volunteerism in advancing community resilience, social cohesion, and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.** At the same time, the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists draws attention to the ecological importance of rangelands and the traditional knowledge of pastoral communities, whose livelihoods are closely intertwined with biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation. **Together, these three International Years underline the importance of valuing care work, community action, and indigenous ecological wisdom as integral components of sustainable development.**

The New Year Vision for 2026 thus calls for a renewed commitment to inclusivity and collective action. Recognising and empowering women farmers, volunteers, and pastoral communities is not merely a matter of social justice, but a strategic imperative for building resilient food systems, sustainable livelihoods, and peaceful societies. By investing in those who sustain agriculture, nurture communities, and steward natural ecosystems, the global community can move closer to a future that is equitable, climate-resilient, and truly sustainable, embodying the conviction that humanity progresses best when it moves forward better together. ●

A Prayer for the New Year 2026
"Teach Us to Count Our Days"

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Please keep in mind that

(a) Psalm 90 marks the beginning of Book IV (chapters 90 to 106) of the Psalms;

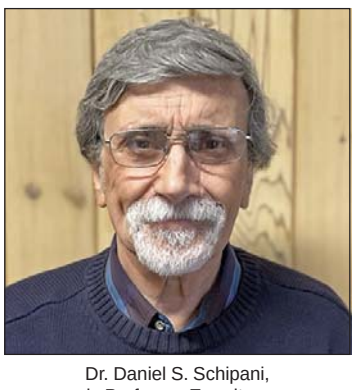
(b) the psalm contrasts the eternity of God with the fragility and precariousness of human existence;

(c) it is the only psalm attributed to Moses, interesting because of the traditional connection between Moses and the divine gift of the "Law" (Torah), which should actually be translated as teaching or instruction for the people of God within the framework of the Covenant.

From a spirituality perspective, verse 12 is at the heart of the psalm. The following paragraphs have a brief commentary on it viewed as a three-part petitionary prayer.

Biblical references to the heart are metaphorical. The heart is thus imagined as the central place and organ of the human person. It is, therefore, another name for the *spirit*, the core of our being, what makes us human created in the image and likeness of the Divine (Genesis 1:27). Gaining a wise heart means growing in moral and spiritual intelligence in order to live well within our community, family, and society.

"Teach us… We earnestly open ourselves to learning, to formation and transformation. Searching, contemplation, and receptivity are hallmarks of healthy spirituality. Becoming "poor in spirit", as highlighted in the first Beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12), is a disposition that makes it possible for us to orient and reorient our life in the light of God.



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Thus "teach us" indicates a necessary first movement in the spiritual journey.

…so to count our days… These words evoke the exhortation of Ephesians 5:15-17, **"Be very careful, then, how you walk—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of the time…understand what the Lord's will is."** There are many ways to count days according to the dominant cultures; but we're called to daily practice discernment in order to make wise choices, not only between good and evil but also between the good and the best.

…that we may gain a wise heart." Biblical references to the heart are metaphorical. The heart is thus imagined as the central place and organ of the human person. It is, therefore, another name for the *spirit*, the core of our being, what makes us human created in the image and likeness of the Divine (Genesis 1:27). Gaining a wise heart means growing in moral and spiritual intelligence in order to live well within our community, family, and society.

This psalm was meant for the community and not only for personal devotional practice. So let's make it our own. Let it be a central commitment and resolution for the New Year. Amen. ●

Young People's Column

New Year Messages

Re-inforce Relationships Between Communities

Lilu Paul

Draw inspiration from Christian hope by identifying a common ground that echoes love, justice and harmony with one another. Jesus himself put emphasis on open human communities grounded on the 'kindom' values that challenge whatever absolutist, exclusive, totalitarian claims religions may entertain.

The 2025 Christmas season is coming to a close, with important questions left behind on religious freedom that has been guaranteed by the Constitution of India for the minority religious communities in India. The recent incidents on the Christmas Day that occurred in many parts of the country prove that being a Christian in this part of the globe, is becoming a dreadful experience for both individuals and communities.

Christian believers turn out to be vulnerable victims to the horrible practices of intimidation, lynching and encroachment on places of worship, which have created an environment of fear among the religious minorities in the country. On the other hand, in places where Christian communities are politically influential and have a seminal role in the decision-making process, the strategy of appeasement is a continuing process with persistent efforts. It is crystal clear that the benefactors of these abhorrent practices may win political victories, but only at the expense of the nation's long-standing values of secularism and religious tolerance. The tragic events that were witnessed in different parts of the country on the Christmas Day 2025 pose serious threats to the present and future of a secular democracy like India.

In such a context, being a community which constantly witnesses threats, lies and confronts malignant propagandas, it is essential, critical and imperative for us to respond to this crucial situation in a different manner. This raises serious questions before us: **How do we react to these kinds of severe problems? What would be our stand at this critical juncture? Disputation or Dialogue? Confrontation or conversation? Are we going to indulge in effortless schisms or initiate a dynamic conversation that tends to preserve the harmony of different faiths in our land? Are we willing to find an ecumenical solution for this unresolved problem? The choice between meaningless arguments and productive dialogue is for us to decide and today it has paramount importance.**

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The Bible teaches us the significance of dialogue among diverse communities, traditions and faiths. Paul underscores the importance of gentleness and respect, and encourages believers facing hardships not to fear threats but to proclaim the hope in Christ (Romans 3:14, 15). It does not refer to passive suffering; rather, it is an attempt to draw inspiration from Christian hope by identifying a common ground that echoes love, justice and harmony with one another. Jesus himself put emphasis on open human communities grounded on the 'kindom' values that challenge whatever absolutist, exclusive, totalitarian claims religions may entertain. Theologians, like *Sebastian Kappen,* call for a 'Reciprocal Acculturation' to be continued between religious traditions in India. He rightly puts that 'this alone will pave the way for a new era of dialogue and diapraxis' *(Divine Challenge and Human Response).*

Jürgen Moltmann* similarly sees dialogue as a medium for reinforcing relationships between communities. He writes 'Today, we face an inflation of dialogues. There is a desire to get into conversation with as many people as possible. The subject about which we are speaking is not so important; the relationship into which we enter in the dialogue is more important. The dialogue of our own day serves the community. These dialogues in search of community go from one church to another, from one religious community to another' *(Hope in These Troubled Times). It is sure that such a dialogue would alleviate the pain of the wounded and reinforce respect and mutual trust among diverse faith traditions.

The situation that persists in India is serious. The incidents in the recent past have reduced Christianity to a position of insecurity and put its followers on the defensive. This sense of insecurity is heightened by the phenomenal growth of conformity shown by church leaders to the ruling regime. Hence, it is incumbent on us to radically revise the present policy of the Churches and call for an open dialogue that is non-sectarian, interreligious and truly ecumenical.

The whole act of dialogue is a humanizing force to bring peaceful coexistence in our country. Therefore, Christianity in India must, on the one hand, radically revise its practice of conformity and, on the other hand, repudiate the complicity with the marginal communities in and outside of the churches. Until that happens, the act of dialogue will remain a merely spurious act!. ●

Book Review

In Praise of Christ at Dawn - 365 Meditations

M. J. Joseph

Book Review by R. C. Thomas

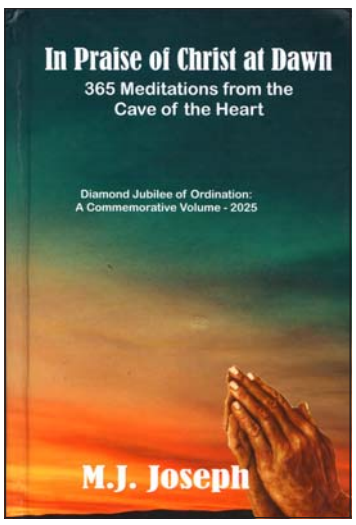
Book Review:
In Praise of Christ at Dawn

Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph, a prolific author, is an octogenarian who is still very vibrant in his innovative thoughts and creative acumen. This commemorative volume of 365 meditations imitates sonnets which passed through the clear mind of the author for the last sixty years of his ordained life. This book includes 'Foreword', 'Reflection' and 'Preface'. At the end a list of books and articles by the author is also provided.

The Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph is former Professor of New Testament and Principal, Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Principal, ISET, ECC and Director, Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, Secretary BTESSC, West Bengal; Member Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, Geneva.

This unique piece of literature attracts the attention of the readers due to its various salient features. The theologian in the author is exposed through his meditations on God, Christ and all the noble virtues which originate from God (d.161). God is presented as creator, who reveals his love. The birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are related to the human experiences of joy, sorrow, frustration and hope. (cf. days. 45, 46, 99, 100, 101, 104, 181, 262). For the author Christ is the risen one (d.248). Rev. Joseph has special talents to transform micro-realities to fantasy world of macro-realities (d.54).

The author is a keen observer of the nature around and magnifies what common people disdain or disown. Trees, flowers,


In Praise of Christ at Dawn
365 Meditations from the Cave of the Heart
Diamond Jubilee of Ordination:
A Commemorative Volume - 2025
M.J. Joseph

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ants, butterflies, spider which spins web and a small bird flowing over the Lake Vembanad (d.42, 86, 108, 341, 344) do not surpass his eyes of surveillance. He reminds us of St. Francis of Assisi when the author exaggerates oxygen as his friend (d.345). His intuitive mind absorbs them and his imagination flies high on the wings of poesy. (cf. days.63). Surely, achan's ecological concerns reverberate in this book strongly (d.293). He does not short-circuit harsh realities of life but transcends limitations of life by hope (d.145, 146, 162). When he says "garrison my heart with your peace" ideas reach the wide vista and avenues of oxymoron (d.29). It is full of similes, metaphor, typology, hyperbole, melodrama etc. (cf. d. 182, 258, 275, 315).

Sweet ideas in this anthology have become palatable even to a secular mind through the poetic psyche of the author facilitating a dialogue of the biblical ideas with the secular mind. Some of the meditations reveal the scientific mind of the author. His observations and imagination about the planet Venus and the heavenly bodies are really interesting. (cf .d.70, 73, 74). The author promotes unity and mutual understanding in this world of fissiparous and divisive tendencies. His universalism in spiritual matters is well reflected through the paraphrasing of the famous Upanishad prayer (cf.d. 66). He quotes and paraphrases the Christian mystic Thomas A. Kempis (sic) (d.356) and the renowned poet John Keats (d.337).

No other word in the Christian vocabulary matches "HALLELUIAH" which helps the author to close the book in a jubilant and elated manner. "Let the literary tribe of M J Joseph Achen increase"!!

Rev. Dr. R. C. Thomas is a Senior Pastor of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church and a former Professor at Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam ●

Global Ethical Crises

Ethical Deprivation

In The Emerging Global Political Economy

V. Mathew Kurian

[Second and concluding part of the paper 'Ethical Deprivation In The Emerging Global Political Economy' published in the Annual Special Issue]

The recently released Inequality report of Paris School of Economics gives shocking information about the widening social economic inequality. In 2025, the wealthiest 10% of the world's population owned 75% of global wealth, the middle 40% held 23% and the bottom half controlled only 2%. The wealthiest 0.001% (60,000 multimillionaires) now controls three times more wealth than the bottom half of humanity. Their share increased from about 4% in 1995 to more than 6% currently.

IV. The Emergence of American Economy as a Military Industrial Complex and its Aftermath

The worst ethical deprivation one could view in the formation of American economy as a 'military industrial complex'. Military industry, run by private corporations, is the backbone of American economy today. The survival of this industry depends on the demand for armaments which has to come from outside. If there is no threat of war, there would be little demand for armaments.

Therefore, through various unethical means, America engineers an environment of war in the global scenario. **In the current Russia-Ukraine war as well as Hamas-Israel war we can discern the strategic foul play of American economic interests.**

The lion's share of international trade especially in value terms is trade in 'war goods'. These goods are intended for killing and destruction. The ethical irony of this situation is that while millions of people in this world are deprived of food, the scarce resources are directed to produce goods just to kill fellow human beings.

V. Some Selected Unethical Manifestations in the present world

The unethical capitalist world economy of today is confronted by a number of vexing problems. The following is a brief discussion of it.

1. Widening global inequality and Deepening Poverty

According to the latest Oxfam Report, the richest 1% of World population control 45% of global wealth. About 44% of world's population live below the World Bank's poverty line of $6.85 (PPP) **Oxfam characterises the Present Age as 'billionaire colonialism'.** In 2024, world's billionaires' wealth increased by a rate three times faster than 2023. The majority of this billionaire wealth is acquired through immoral means like cronyism and corruption.

Dr. V. Mathew Kurian is the Joint Director of Dr. K. N. Raj Centre of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala

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2. Technological Advances, Labour Displacement and Digital criminalisation

The world is now exposed to fast changing technology with its implication on all walks of socio-economic life. AI is killing jobs and human labour power is getting redundant. Digital technology is increasingly facilitating immoral actors

3. Crony capitalism and rampening corruption

The current capitalism is 'crony capitalism'. It is increasingly driven by corruptive practices. Democracy exists only in name's sake. Even in the so-called democratic politics, people only select the rulers and when the government is formed it caters to the interests of the wealthy and the powerful. Democratic countries like the USA and India are victims of this political decay.

4. Swelling Environmental Hazards and its Ethical Costs

Swelling environmental hazards include resource exhaustion, pollution, global warming and climate change, bio-diversity loss, desertification and the like. The great economists like K. E. Boulding characterise our planet as 'space ship earth'. This earth naturally contains all the prerequisites to preserve life like ozone, air, water, fertile soil. But the present unethical mode of life of humans threatens the sustainability of the natural ecosystem. Environmental hazards create massive ethical costs by unfairly burdening vulnerable communities and future generations.

VI. Conclusion

At present, humanity is on the verge of a collective suicide. The present dominant political economy paradigm, freed from ethics, is mainly responsible for it. We need an alternative political economy to overcome this 'ethical deprivation' and to ensure a healthy sustainable future not only for the present generations but also for all coming generations. ●

World Council of Churches

WCC condemns US Attacks on Venezuela, calls for respect for international law

>>> Contd. from Page 8 Col. 1

The statement emphasized the broader global implications of the events.

WCC statement on Venezuela

The attacks conducted by the United States of America in Venezuela and the capture and detention of President Maduro and his wife are stunningly flagrant violations of international law. These actions set a dangerous precedent and example for others who seek to shrug off all constraints against the use of armed aggression and brute force to achieve political objectives.

The World Council of Churches calls urgently for the cessation of such attacks, for respect for the principles of international law and sovereignty of States, for the resolution of disputes through dialogue and diplomacy rather than by armed violence, and for the United Nations and the Organization of American States to take swift action to ensure all members respect the relevant charters and conventions.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary World Council of Churchers Speaks

In these dangerous and uncertain times, the world needs wise and courageous leaders for peace, rather than the proliferation of conflicts and the normalization of international illegality risking a deeper descent into chaos. We pray for wisdom and peace to prevail in this context and in other parts of the world.

– WCC News

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Mammen Varkey

Christmas Reflections - 3

Invaluable lessons for a 'knowledge society'

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." *Matthew 2: 1, 2*

The legend in a knowledge society

In the reflections, published in the last two issues of the People's Reporter, on 'the wise men from the East', it was shared that it was quite necessary to have a radical re-understanding of the story of the wise men, in the present times of a 'knowledge society'. The legend, now, assumes greater importance than in the days of an agricultural society or an industrial society. Listening to its essential message is vitally important. The message should not go unheard.

Journey out of the centre, to see the truth

The legend calls us to open our ears to the wise voices from outside too; to tune our ears to listen to the words of wisdom from alien cultures, other religions and unexpected quarters. These voices call us to leave, 'Jerusalem' and to go to 'Bethlehem', to leave the centre and to journey to the periphery, in order to see the new born king. It does call us not to sell our knowledge to 'Herods', to the reigning political and economic powers and cause innocent children to be killed. The reigning powers will only use 'the glad tidings of great joy' to eliminate the baby born to 'save them from their sins'. The same news, for the shepherds, turned out to be a matter of great joy and salvation. **This contrast between 'Herods' and 'Shepherds' should become central in our re-understanding in an age of 'knowledge'.**

Free ourselves from the captivity

Another equally important matter in the age of knowledge is the need to become aware of our captivity to static understanding or 'knowledge' and to have very genuine effort to free ourselves from that captivity and to submit ourselves to the new knowledge being unfolded. The new knowledge proclaims that the new 'king' would be born not in palaces of the reigning kings, but in 'mangers'. It then, becomes mandatory to re-route our intellectual , even spiritual, journey and dare to travel to 'Bethlehem'. **The captivity to our traditional understandings will destroy the possibility of encountering the truth in 'Bethlehem'. The new 'knowledge' system demands re-drawing the maps of our intellectual and, hence, spiritual journeys.**

Before we close this reflection, we have to turn our attention to a few more things

1. Be harbingers of a 'new kingdom'

It was a great opportunity for the chief priests and the scribes. They simply ignored and threw it away. In their uncritical collaboration with the ruling power, 'Herod' , what they lost was the possibility to herald the birth of a new king and to be part in the establishment of a new Kingdom. What do the religions in general and the Church, in particular and the chief priests and scribes, of today do? **Are they harbingers of a 'new kingdom', in a knowledge society?**

2. Conversion in the 'age of knowledge'

The blossoming (the full expression) of the wisdom of the wise men, is revealed in their falling down (Matthew.2:11) before just an ordinary child, at least externally, on the lap of an ill-clad village woman sitting in a non-descript temporary shelter! Do we ever realize that liberating truth can be lying in the 'laps' of ordinary 'women' in non-descript situations. The age of knowledge demands a new conversion.

3. Even at the cost of our lives, preserve 'saving' knowledge

The most significant thing in the legend is the costly refusal of the wise- men to share the knowledge about the place where the child lay, with Herod, the reigning king. Risking their lives, the wise-men defied the orders of Herod and 'departed by another way'. The courage to face the wrath of Herod and to encounter the possibility of being caught by the King's spies and soldiers, and be killed, and to preserve the knowledge away from the king, the ruler, is unbelievable. It was this most amazing act that made them, in history, ***'the wise men'. [For a detailed reflection on this, please read Mammen Varkey 'Vichara Dhara – No.5' How did they become the 'wise' men ?]***

In a knowledge society, we are called, even at the cost of our lives, to preserve , to facilitate the growth of, 'saving', 'liberating' knowledge, 'the knowledge' that assures 'fullness of life' to all people.

●

To be continued

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

Be Satisfied With What You Have

A. V. Itty

1 Tim. 6:3-10

"So then, if you have food and clothes, that should be enough" (v. 8).

St. Paul has put down the golden rules for a contented life, in the Scripture portion we are meditating upon.

It has been recorded as part of the advice he gives to the young minister Timothy, concerning practical Christian living. In this age of globalisation, when greed and avarice are on the rise, these ideas are very relevant.

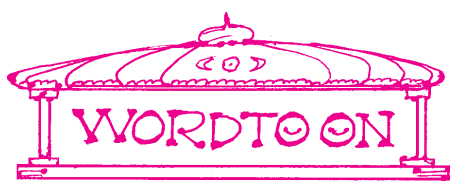
Wants often take the place of needs and wants give way to greed. It is one of the major problems of today. It may not be possible to live without desires. But, if we are unable to control our desires, it could make a hell of our lives.

The people who are satisfied with what they have, do not get tense or anxious. We should be able to control our thoughts from being turned into anxiety. See what a poet has written: "If you can't become a pine on the mountain, be satisfied in being a shrub in the valley. If you can't be a tree, be satisfied in being a plant. If you can't be a road, be satisfied in being a path".

It is not that you shouldn't become anything. But, rather be happy and satisfied with what you are and what you have. This is the sure way to a life of contentment.

It is of great relevance today to remember, what the Apostle says about the pitfalls into which those who want to be rich, or those who are ruled by the philosophy of greed might fall. "But, those who want to get rich fall into temptation and are caught in the trap of many foolish and harmful desires, which pull them down to ruin and destruction" (v.9). The Apostle's words that "The love of money is the root cause of all evil" (v.10), are also equally relevant. Get away from it, and you will be able to lead a contented life in this world. May God help us for that. ●

Prof. A. V. Itty, former Professor of English at Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara, is, now, engaged in the Evangelical, and Educational Ministry undertaken by ADORE in the Rayagada Dist. of Odisha. 94950 17850 (Mob)



Like a **MASTER**, the **MAST** should never **STIR**!

Food For Thought:

The richest person is the one who controls his/her wants and desires!

WCC condemns US Attacks on Venezuela, calls for respect for international law

World Council of Churches (WCC) General Secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay has strongly condemned recent attacks carried out by the United States of America in Venezuela, including the capture and detention of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, describing the actions as "stunningly flagrant violations of international law."

Informal housing
on the hills around Caracas, Venezuela.
Photo: Sean Hawkey"/Life on Earth

In a statement, the WCC general secretary warned that the attacks set a dangerous global precedent by normalizing the use of armed force to achieve political objectives.

"These actions set a dangerous precedent and example for others who seek to shrug off all constraints against the use of armed aggression and brute force to achieve political objectives," wrote Pillay.

He called for an immediate cessation of attacks and for renewed respect for the principles of international law and state sovereignty. It also appealed to international bodies to take swift action.

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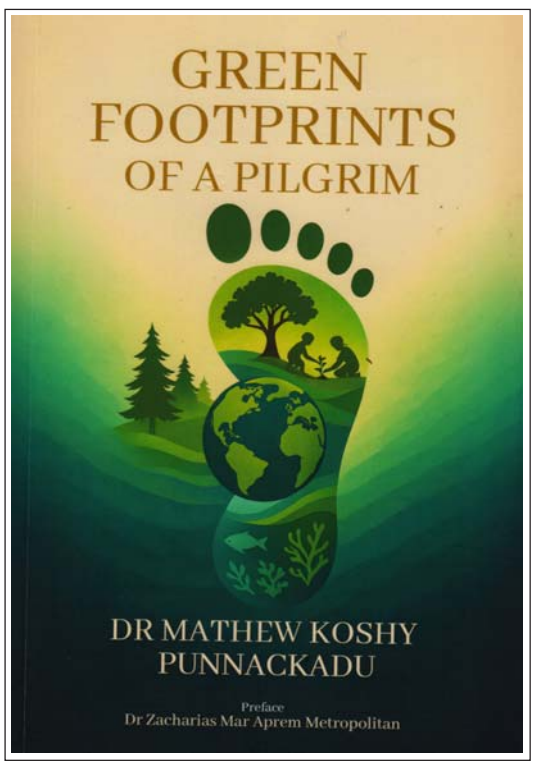
GREEN FOOTPRINTS OF A PILGRIM



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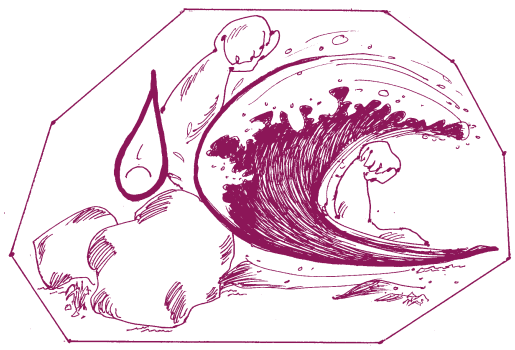

'Individually you are one drop.
Together we are an OCEAN!'

– Ryunosuke Satoro

World Council of Churches calls for sanctions on Israel

A view of damaged historical buildings such as mosques, churches, baths and bazaars damaged or destroyed by Israeli attacks in Gaza City, Gaza
[Bilal Salem – Anadolu Agency]

The World Council of Churches has called on the European Union to impose sanctions and an arms embargo on Israel over what it described as a war of genocide in the Gaza Strip and violations against Palestinians in the West Bank.

Iskandar Majlton, the local coordinator of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, which is affiliated with the World Council of Churches, said the council was "deeply shocked by the cycle of violence and the immense suffering" in the region. He said the council's position is based on international law and human rights, and that it strongly condemns all attacks targeting civilians. He added that the world is witnessing an "unprecedented humanitarian disaster" in the Gaza Strip, where thousands of civilians have been killed, most of them women and children, and where almost the entire population has been displaced amid widespread destruction, hunger and disease.

He stressed that the "tragic cycle of violence" in Gaza did not begin in October 2023, but is the result of decades of occupation, the blockade imposed on Gaza, and systematic inequality.

Israeli occupation authorities have notified more than ten international humanitarian organisations that their permits to operate in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip will be revoked, according to local reports.

A correspondent said the organisations affected included Doctors Without Borders and other international aid groups that are among the most active in providing humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

According to the Israeli notice, the permits will be withdrawn from 1 January 2026, and the organisations have been instructed to cease all operations by 1 March 2026. Israeli authorities said the decision was taken because the organisations allegedly failed to complete newly required registration procedures for humanitarian work.

– WCC News

People's Reporter
A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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